



Nevada Operations Office News

National Nuclear Security Administration

News Media Contact:

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For Immediate Release:

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Notice of Intent Issued for Supplemental Programmatic EIS Regarding Modern Pit Facility

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) today announced its intent to prepare a Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Stockpile Stewardship and Management for a Modern Pit Facility. This notice is the first step in carrying out recommendations to develop a modern capability to manufacture plutonium pits. Pit production was shut down in 1989 at the Rocky Flats Plant, and no pits have been produced since. The NNSA's strategy calls for a new facility to be in production by approximately 2020.

The United States is the only nuclear power without the capability to manufacture a plutonium pit, a critical component of a nuclear weapon that functions as a trigger to allow a modern nuclear weapon to function. A new facility would reestablish the capability to manufacture all pit types in the nation's current nuclear stockpile and meet any future requirements in an environmentally compliant manner.

The action supports a recommendation in the Bush Administration's Nuclear Posture Review, which states that the ability to produce pits is important to ensure the future viability of the nation's nuclear deterrent. The lack of pit production capability has also been identified as a critical defense readiness gap by Congress, the Department of Defense and outside experts, including the Chiles Commission and the Foster Panel.

This supplement to the Programmatic EIS will support two decisions: (1) whether to proceed with a Modern Pit Facility; and (2) if so, where to locate it. Five potential locations will be evaluated in the EIS: (1) Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) at Los Alamos, New Mexico; (2) Nevada Test Site, north of Las Vegas, Nevada; (3) Pantex Plant at Amarillo, Texas; (4) Savannah River Site at Aiken, South Carolina; and (5) the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant at Carlsbad, New Mexico. The EIS will also evaluate the no-action alternative of maintaining current plutonium pit capabilities at LANL, and the reasonableness of upgrading the existing facilities at

LANL to increase pit production capacity.

NNSA is inviting comments related to its intention to prepare this Supplemental Programmatic EIS. Comments should be submitted within 60 days and can be mailed to Mr. Jay Rose, Document Manager, U.S. Department of Energy/NNSA, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20585. Comments may also be faxed to 1-202-586-5324, or e-mailed to James.Rose@nnsa.doe.gov.

Public meetings to discuss issues and receive comments on the scope of this EIS will be held in the vicinity of site alternatives, as well as in Washington, D.C. The public scoping meetings will provide the public with an opportunity to present comments, ask questions, and discuss issues with NNSA representatives regarding this EIS. The locations, dates, and times for these public scoping meetings are as follows:

Pantex – October 8, 2002
7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
College Union Building, Oak Room
Amarillo College, Washington Street Campus
24th and Jackson Streets
Amarillo, TX 79178
(806) 371-5100

Carlsbad, NM – October 10, 2002
7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.
U.S. Department of Energy
Carlsbad Area Office
Skeen-Whitlock Building
4021 National Parks Highway
Carlsbad, NM 88220
(505) 234-7227

Washington, D.C. – October 15, 2002
2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW; Room 1E-245
Washington, D.C. 20585
(202) 586-0821

Nevada Test Site – October 17, 2002

7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

U.S. Department of Energy

Nevada Operations Office

Auditorium

232 Energy Way

North Las Vegas, NV 89030

(702) 295-3521

Los Alamos National Laboratory – October 24, 2002

7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Duane W. Smith Auditorium

1400 Diamond Drive

Los Alamos, NM 87544

(505) 663-2510

Savannah River Site – October 29, 2002

7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

North Augusta Community Center

495 Brookside Avenue

North Augusta, SC 29841

(803) 441-4290